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HB0249 Residential Real Property – Local Limits on Summoning Law Enforcement or Emergency Services Judiciary Committee Hearing, January 22, 2025

Position: FAVORABLE

To the Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Community Legal Services submits this testimony in support of HB0249. This legislation ensures that the legislature’s intent in passing legislation to prohibit local limits on residents making potentially lifesaving calls for assistance will be fully implemented.

Community Legal Services (CLS) is a nonprofit organization that provides free legal services in a broad range of substantive areas to individuals and families who meet certain income-eligibility restrictions. Our organization is committed to the promotion of family and community stability and success through provision of quality legal representation for those who would not otherwise have equitable access to access to justice and due process. We represent many clients who are elderly, have disabilities and who are domestic violence survivors.

Laws that penalize or restrict Maryland residents from seeking help from emergency services and law enforcement agencies when needed potentially risk the lives and wellbeing of residents who most need that help. The General Assembly wisely passed legislation in a prior session that prohibits local jurisdictions from enacting legislation that would chill efforts of Maryland residents to seek help for emergencies or to stop or prevent domestic violence either by limiting the number of calls that a resident can make or by imposing fines or other penalties for making such calls. (Real Property Code Section 14-126.) This bill simply ensures that the intended result of the legislature’s prior action is fully realized, even in instances where local legislation limiting such calls had been enacted prior to the effective date of RP Section 14-126. By adding two words to RP Section 14-126 - changing “may not enact a local law or ordinance...” to “may not enact **or enforce** a local law or ordinance...,” this bill simply clarifies that, in instances where a local jurisdiction currently has a local law on the books that would violate RP Section 14-126, the local jurisdiction may not *enforce* that local law.

We urge this committee to ensure that the General Assembly’s efforts to prevent the restriction of Maryland residents’ ability to seek help when needed are fully implemented by issuing a FAVORABLE report on this modest amendment to existing law.

Please feel free to reach out to Jessica Quincosa, Executive Director, and Lisa Sarro, Director of Litigation and Advocacy, with any questions at quincosa@clspgc.org and sarro@clspgc.org, respectively.